Jan.-June 1997

NORTH QUEENSLAND NATURALISTS CLUB

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EDITION 203

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FOUNDER PRESIDENT: *The late DR. HUGO FLECKER*
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OBJECTS: The furtherance of the study of the various branches of Natural History and the preservation of our heritage of indigenous flora and fauna.

MEETINGS: Second Tuesday of each month at 8pm at the Cairns Education Centre, Greenslopes Street, Edgehill, Cairns.

FIELD DAYS: Sunday before meeting.

CLUB OFFICERS:

PRESIDENT	—	*MR. TED BILL*
HON. SECRETARY	—	*MRS. DAWN MAGARRY*
HON. TREASURER	—	*MRS. DERNA ELSDON*
EDITOR	—	*MS. ELEANOR DUIGNAN*

SUBSCRIPTIONS: (Due September 30th)

CITY AND SUBURBAN MEMBERS	**$15.00**
COUNTRY MEMBERS & PENSIONERS	**$10.00**
FAMILY MEMBERSHIP	**$20.00**

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FROM THE EDITOR

January to June of 1997 has been favoured with good rain to such an extent field Naturalists are becoming despondent in their hopes of ever acquiring a fine weekend. Due to the good rainfall throughout the north birding has become hard work as dams and watercourses have an abundance of watering spots making birds less confined to only a few watering points. Cyclone Justin, although not seriously destructive brought in some unlikely pelargic species though only the keenest of birdos were out to make notes.

Cool changes have also kept reptiles and ambhibian surveys in low numbers, although record frog numbers were counted during the warmer months.

For all the environmental damage caused by increased population and suburbia in and around Cairns there are favoured reports coming in from Mareeba and the new wetlands sanctuary of increased wildlife activity and regrowth, some species having never been seen in the area previously.

To the South of Cairns, the Turf Farm (although still under threat of development) is being fully maintained and produces good bird habitat along with the Cairns Crocodile Farm. Local Council still insist on developing the Cairns Esplanade (with a saltwater pool) but on the other hand seem deeply concerned with making the immediate locale a Crocodile Free Zone!

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THE TINAROO REPORT

By: Ben Constable

In April of this year (1997), Tinaroo Dam once more filled to capacity so for the first time since mid 1991 tourists are again focusing their cameras on the lacy patterns made by frothing waters cascading down the spillway into the Barron River. Eventhough a full dam may bring joy to the hearts of farmers and water-skiers, birdwatchers on the lake find that it is not as rewarding as might be expected for many aquatic birds have left to take advantage of the more transitory wetlands where abundant food is more readily available.

Other lake dwellers such as the Eastern Water Dragon (Physignathus lesueurii), Saw-shelled Turtle (Elseya latisternum) and the Platypus, creatures that are to be seen daily when the waters are more confined have also dispersed to exploit the food to be found on the inundated grasslands, and consequently are now seldom seen.

Japanese Snipe that gather on the Wright Creek arm of the lake to feed up for the long flight back to the Northern Hemisphere were less numerous this year, the most seen at one time was seven and the last of these flushed on the 24th of April. In comparison, last year on several occasions through March and April I flushed as many as 25 from a swampy area on the lake's edge that was no larger than 1/3 of a hectacre, while one lingered till May 4th.

The last sighting of the resident flock of Cattle Egrets before they departed for their breeding rookery in the Innisfail area was on December 9th when I counted over 200 basking in the morning sun from their perches in the tops of lakeside trees. While a few still in breeding plumage returned in mid-February (perhaps victims of unrequited love) the bulk of the flock did not arrive back till late April.

Observing nature does not have to be confined to any particular place however, for every type of environment has life forms that are interesting to study and marvel at. I have two Green Tree Frogs (Litoria caerulea) that spend their days in the overflow pipe of the laundry sink and sit on the window sill at night which are now so tame they not only take moths and cockroaches from my hand but too often latch onto my finger as well in the process.

I am always threatening to clean away the mud nests of the wasps and hornets that are disfiguring the patio walls, but they too offer a continuing fund of new discoveries. One hot day, wondering where they obtained their mud from, I watched one drink deeply from the bird bath and then fly to a patch of dust on the driveway and use this water to mix their required mud pellets. I found it could make three mud pellets before it needed to replentish the water supply.

Then, there are the spiders. The Huntsman (Isopoda immani) whose legs span more than 120mm, scampering crabwise across the walls to capture insects attracted by the light shining through the windows.

The common Garden Spiders (Araneidna transmarinus) are a never ending source of absorbing interest. While humans have only just discovered the necessity of 'recycling' these spiders have practiced the habit for millions of years. I watched on spin a web averaging 76cm in diameter with an average of 45 concentric gossamer rings every night for more than a month. The construction of each one of these exquisite works of art took 1 1/2 hours of non-stop application, yet in the morning just before dawn it would gather the web into a tiny ball with its forelegs and then consume it, all within less than five minutes. In the King James Bible (Proverbs Chap. 6 Verse 6) it is written 'Go to the Ant thou sluggard, consider her ways and be wise'. The Author of that I am sure was a Naturalist, but I wonder if he ever watched the Spiders!

WHAT WERE THEY?

By: Dawn Magarry

On Friday March 7th whilst walking in the garden of our home, Arnold picked up a fallen leaf on the footpath. On it were four empty pupa cases - three on the top side of the leaf and another on the under side. The pupa were cemented onto the leaf surface. The cases were quite hard and open at one end where obviously the occupant had emerged.

Each case was nearly 3cm long, 1.75cm wide and 1cm deep. Each exit was in exactly the same location on each pupa and behind this were two distinct lines 4mm apart. What they were we had no idea.

One of the cases was given to club member Ceri Pearce who took it to Ross Storey, entomologist with the DPI Mareeba. Ross identified the pupal case of the Moth Butterfly (Liphyra brassolis major).

Referring to the book 'Butterflies of Australia' by Common and Waterhouse, this particular species lays its eggs on a branch close to the nest of the Green Tree Ant (Oecophylla smaragdina). On hatching, the lava enter the nest and proceed to feed on the lava of the tree ants. On reaching maturity the lava pupates within its larval skin inside the nest and on emergence the butterfly is covered with deciduous scales which prevent the adult ants from attacking it as it leaves the nest.

Further investigation by Arnold and myself concluded the leaf was from a Milky Pine (Alstonia scholaris) which is very popular with the Green Tree Ants for nesting.

Mareeba Wetland
FOUNDATION

History and aims of the Foundation

The Mareeba Wetlands idea was conceived in 1994. The global importance of wetlands is now well understood, and linking this with agricultural development to provide a truly sustainable project caught the imagination of a group of people in Mareeba who lobbied to get the project up and running.

The Mareeba Wetland Foundation was established in April 1996 as 'not for profit' environmental company, with the main aim of creating and managing the Mareeba Wetlands project for conservation purposes.

The Foundation was successful in obtaining Commonwealth Government funding in July of that year with the assistance of all three tiers of government and local community support. Since then, work on the project has been in full swing, with the Foundation expecting to achieve its target of creating 5 wetlands and associated habitat within two years.

The project uses water currently exiting the Mareeba-Dimbulah Irrigation Area and redirects it through the wetlands system to areas of potential irrigated agriculture. In doing so, a valuable wildlife and tourism asset has been opened up on an area of some 2,000 hectacres at the foot of the Hann Tableland to the northwest of Mareeba, just one hour's drive from Cairns and its tourism hub and International Airport. The wetlands, being situated on the East Asian-Austrlasian flyway, will attract migratory birds and provide a sanctuary for a wide variety of Australian terrestrial and aquatic wildlife.

It is intended to maximise the tourism potential of the Mareeba Wetlands through the construction of tourism facilities provided by private investment. The Foundation will direct its income from sustainable tourism into managing the Mareeba Wetlands, as well as valuable wetlands research work and education programmes. It will seek to establish a conservation area in conjunction with adjoining landowners and the State over an area of 15,000 hectacres extending to the pristine rainforest areas on the top of the Hann Tableland.

Membership

Membership of the Mareeba Wetland Foundation is open to the public, and the Foundation encourages active participation from its members. A nominal charge of $10 for individuals

($20 overseas), and $50 for groups and companies is made to cover postage and administration. Fees become due in January of each year, but members who joined in 1996, the year of the Foundation's establishment, will automatically continue for 1997, therefore not becoming due for renewal until January 1998. Junior and Family memberships will commence once the wetlands are fully open. Nomination of new members can be arranged by the Board at their regular monthly meetings if necessary.

The foundation produces a quarterly newsletter for all members, and regular members' events are to be held in the wetlands with the opportunities for members to become involved in valuable habitat creation work.

A culmination of Community groups held a weekend camp at the wetlands May 31st and June 1st. Supportive members from Groups participating in conjunction with Mareeba Wetlands Foundation members were from - The North Queensland Naturalists Club, The Bird Observers Club of Australia - Cairns Branch, The Cape York Herpetologists Society, The Tablelands Frog Group, and the Tableland Fish Stocking Society.

The weekend was indeed an unforgettable event considering the habitat structure and growth is relatively new. Surveys conducted of the various categories of fauna species either commenced or added to the Foundation's current existing lists. All participants tried extremely hard in their endeavours with Michael Anthony of the Herpetologists listing several previously unrecorded reptiles for the area. Checklists of species will be available in the near future from the Foundation with updated information being added on a regular basis as habitat conditions improve.

September 7th is the date set aside for the next naturalist's field trip to the Mareeba Wetlands. All members are invited to participate as results of the surveys carried out will be recorded by the wetlands.

At the General Meeting held on February 11th, 1997 members voted in vavour of joining the above Foundation. On February 25th Dawn and Arnold Magarry represented the Club at the unveiling of the Foundation Stone by the Queensland Governor - Mrs Leneen Ford.

Membership of the Foundation entitles Club members to visit at any time and to later use facilities as they become available. The Foundation welcomes reports of flora and fauna sightings. These can be sent to the foundation at P.O. Box 175, Mareeba. Qld. 4880.

KNOW YOUR REPTILE AROUND CAIRNS

By: Tim Hawkes and Michael Anthony

COMMON TREE SNAKE (Dendrelaphis punctulata) 'Fine spotted tree snake' (Gray, 1826)

Other common names - Tree snake, green tree snake, grass snake golden grass snake, (McPhee, 1979), Australian bronzeback (Storr, Smith and Johnstone, 1986).

History

This species was the first Australian Colubrid snake to be described, in 1826 by J.E. Gray, as Leptophis punctulatus from a specimen collected from Careening Bay in north Western Australia. Gray described a further two species, Elaps lewisii in 1841 and Dendrophis (Ahetula) olivacea in 1842, which fall under the same synonymy (i.e. they are both now regarded as being D. punctulata). C. Girard in 1858 described an animal collected by a U.S. Exploring Expedition as Dendrophis prasinus. Type locality, Australia. W. Macleay continued to divide this species into a further four species - in 1875 as Dendrophis gracilis from Townsville, Queensland, in 1877 as Dendrophis breviceps from Mawatta, Binaturi River, P.N.G.; in 1878 as Dendrophis olivacea from (presumably) Port Darwin, N.T., and in 1884 as Dendrophis bilorealis from Ripple Creek, Herbert River, Queensland.

Distribution

As is evident from the above specimen locality for D. breviceps, the common tree snake has an extra-limital distribution in P.N.G. Within Australia it occurs in mesic habitats along coastal areas from the Kimberley through the Northern Territory and Queensland to New South Wales. It is presumed that this species has the southern most distribution of all Australian Colubrids, occurring as far south as the Illawarra district (McPhee, 1979). It is possible that this species range may also extend further inland than any other Australian Colubrid species, except for possibly the brown snake (Boiga irregularis).

This species attains an average length of 1.2m, although there are records of 2m animals, with a maximum of 2.15m for an individual recorded by McPhee (1979).

The common tree snake is principally arboreal, often seen basking on elevated sites in foliage or on branches. Adaptations which equip it well to climbing are the sharp latero-ventral keels which run along the entire length of the body. These are used to grip onto any irregularities, i.e., flaking bark, when climbing seemingly impossible obstacles. The strongly prehensile tail is also an aid to climbing, and is used to grip tree limbs and branches securely.

Despite its superb adaptations to climbing, the common tree snake is most often observed active on the ground. It is also an excellent swimmer (Storr, Smith and Johnstone, 1986).

Its appearance varies considerably with a number of colour morphs recognised. The most familiar colour pattern of snakes in Cairns region consists of a green or green-black dorsal colouring and a noticeable yellow ventral surface which is more vividly coloured along the latero-ventral margin and under the throat. Nearly all black and deep blue specimens also occur around Cairns and in drier regions west of Cairns animals may be a light green or brown in colour. In the Townsville area a black with yellow belly occurs. A golden-brown to yellow variety also occurs in areas of the Kimberley, Northern Territory and parts of Queensland, including Cape York.

A distinct characteristic of this species is its ability to exhibit, when alarmed, bright blue spots normally concealed beneath scales on the skin, by inflating the body. These warning colours, accompanied by the emission of a strong odour secreted by the anal glands and its sometimes nervous disposition, striking quickly when provoked, makes this species an awkward snake to handle at times as it will bite willingly if provoked. Despite this convincing threat display this species is non-venomous and hence harmless, unless you happen to be a frog!

Many green tree frogs (Litoria caerulea, L. gracilenta, L. infrafrenata) fall prey to the common tree snake during its daily foragings for food. Being a diurnal hunter, this snake encounters frogs while they are resting during the day and the householder may be alerted to the snakes presence by the frog's alarming distress call uttered when grasped. Prey is generally swallowed alive and eventually dies from asphyxiation in the gut of the snake. In addition, small skinks, geckos, tadpoles and allegedly, birds and fish are also consumed. There is also a record of a broad-headed snake (Hoplocephalus bungaroides) being consumed by this species (Gow, 1976). A specimen of the common tree snake was found in the stomach of a road killed king brown snake (Psuedechis australis) west of Mt. Garnet, Queensland.

Reproduction

This species is oviparous and may lay anywhere from 5-14 eggs in a clutch, during December to February (Ehmann, 1992). Eggs are deposited in hollow logs, in leaf mulch or in rock cavities or crevices. East coast populations seem to reproduce seasonally whereas tropical populations in the top end of the N.T. show no obvious signs of reproductive seasonality or at least have an extended breeding season (Shine, 1991).

Eggs incubated at a temperature range of 23-27 degrees Celsius commenced hatching after 107 days. At birth young average 330mm in total length (Swan, 1990).

Records of gregarious behaviour have also been reported (Cogger, 1975, Covacevich and Limpus, 1973, Gow, 1976). McPhee, (1979) reports seven specimens found together in a rood in Sydney. Telford (pers. comm.) reports on a female and two males together in a cupboard in North Queensland.

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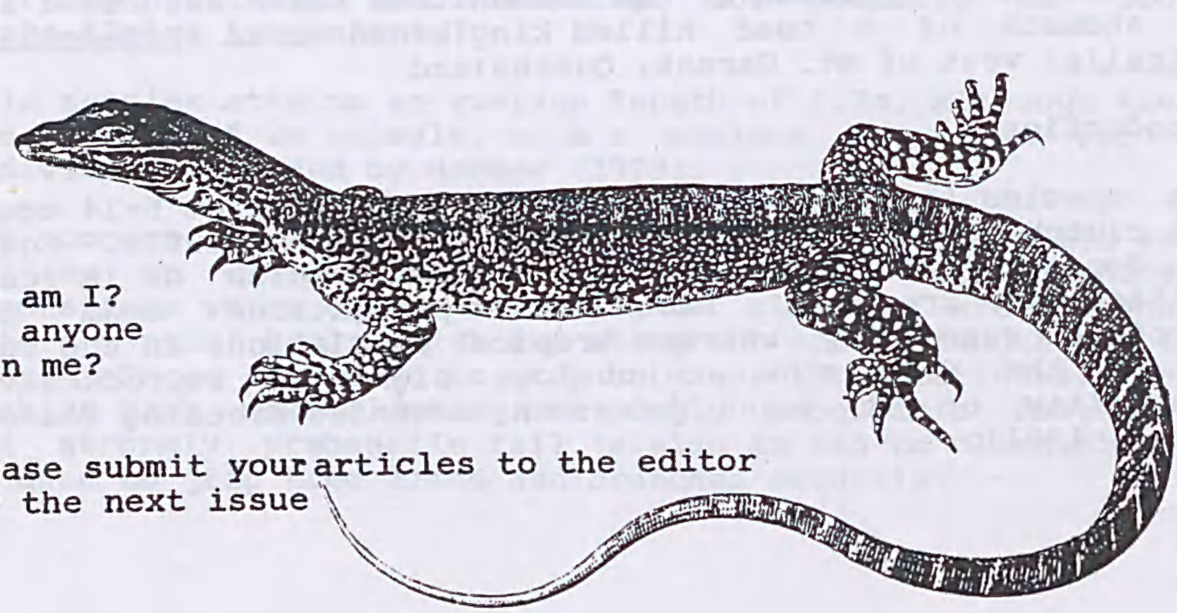

Who am I?
Has anyone
seen me?

Please submit your articles to the editor
for the next issue

THE GOLDEN BOWERBIRD

(An excerpt from 'The Frogmouth' BOCA - Cairns Branch originally from 'In Quest of Bowerbirds' by Norman Chaffer and published by Rigby Publishers 1984).

In September 1882 a plain-coloured brown and grey bird was collected by Kendall Broadbent in a rainforest area in the upper reaches of the Tully River. Broadbent, who was a competent collector, sent the specimen to the Queensland Museum. It was submitted to C.W. De Vis, the curator of the museum, who described the bird in 1883 in the journal of the Linnean Society of New South Wales, giving it the name Prionodura newtoniana. At the time the bird was not known to be a member of the bowerbird family.

In January 1889 a beautiful golden bird was collected on the slopes of Mt. Bellenden-Ker by Archibald Meston. This specimen was also lodged at the Queensland Museum, and the bird was described by De Vis who promptly pronounced it to be a new bird and set up a new genus and species for it with the name Corymbicola mestoni. Within a few weeks of naming the bird, additional specimens of the golden bird were received from Broadbent who had again visited the Bellenden-Ker region. He observed the beautiful adult male birds associating with examples of the plain-coloured bird which he had collected in 1882 and in addition discovered that the birds were bower-builders.

De Vis immediately discarded the name Corymbicola mestoni and wrote an article for the Royal Society of Queensland entitled 'A Further Account of Prionodura newtoniana'. This was published in June 1889 and gave a detailed description of the adult male, female and young male, as well as an account of the large bower built by the species.

Various well-known ornithologists had visited north-Queensland before 1889 when Meston collected the first male Golden Bowerbird and it is surprising that all failed to find the brilliant male or its extraordinary bower. The probable reason is the the species if confined to the higher mountain areas and is rarely encounted below an altitude of 750m.

Kendall Broadbent's success in collecting a series of specimens of the bird in 1889, and in finding its bower, induced other groups of ornithologists and collectors to visit the area and numbers of specimens were collected. W. S. Day, who resided in the area for nine years, collected hundreds of specimens of the birds. The shooting of large numbers of the beautiful creatures was a callous and unnecessary procedure. As the species is confined to strictly limited habitats centered on the Atherton Tableland the collectors must have seriously reduced the bird's numbers.

Common crow ♂

FIELD TRIP TO MT. CARBINE
MAY 3-5 1997

By: Dawn Magarry

range aeroplane ♂

Keen Naturalist members held a 3 day Field Trip/Camp at Mt. Carbine, a small township approximately 68km north of Mareeba on the road to Cooktown. Mt. Carbine was until recently the site of a large wolfram mine.

Because of the large water storage area and various adjacent watering points Mt. Carbine offers an abundance of birdlife although at first glance one would wonder what could possibly be seen here!

Besides birdwatching it was a chance to study moths so with the latest addition to the club's library - 'A Field Guide to Insects of Australia' by Paul Zborowski and Ross Storey and 'Moths of Australia' by I.F.B. Common the group set about long walks during which we successfully identified six species.

Most exciting of these was finding Amerila rubripes illustrated in 'A Field Guide to Insects of Australia'. Common refers to a moth Rhodogastria rubripes which has the same habits and locale but however, is not illustrated. They both belong to the same family Arctiidae. (We think both names refer to the same species).

This moth when threatened exuded a frothy substance from glands near its head and which is a repellent to predators. Common states that the larvae of R. rubripes feed on the introduced Rubber Vine Cryptosegia grandiflora of which there is an over abundance in the area.

Other moths identified were as follows:-

Argina astrea
Amarta aperta
Nyctemera baulus
Utetheisa pulchelloides
Opodiptheran eucalyptii

With the help of Derna Elsdon, twenty-seven species of butterflies were identified including three new to members. (1) Fiery Jewel found on top of the Rocky Park Lookout. (2) Orange Migrant in the lower area. (3) Yellow Spot Blue in the Mary River area.

Other species of butterflies were:-

Common Crow
Blue Tiger
Forget-me-not
Common Grass Yellow
Cape York Aeroplane
Orange Aeroplane
Dingy Bush Brown
Orchard
Lesser Wanderer
Blue Argus
Wanderer
Northern Jesebel
Grass Yellow
Orange Bush Brown
Meadow Argus
Big Greasy
Dingy Ringlet
Orange Ringlet
Ulysses
Caper White
Cruiser
Brown Soldier
Orange Dart
Evening Brown

Early on Sunday evening 4th May the Hale-Bopp Comet was plainly visible towards the north west. The floodlit grounds of the camping area attracted a Boobook Owl and several insectivorous bats which swooped to feed on the abundance of moths and insects.

Next morning we were woken to a chorus of Blue-faced Honeyeaters, Magpies, Pied Butcherbirds, Magpie Larks and White bellied Cuckoo-Shrikes all busy catching the fallen moths and insects.

A total of 78 birds were recorded for the weekend.

Lesser wanderer ♂

Evening brown ♂

OUR COVER

The Frill-neck Lizard (Chlamydosarus kingii). Depicted by artist Peter Longhurst for Living Australia magazine. My first encounter only recent at a property near Mt. Molloy. The 'Lizard of Oz' is one of the great symbols of Australia, along with the kangaroo and the koala.

The frill-neck is one of the largest agamids (dragon lizards) in Australia, and a mature male can measure almost 1m in length. Their powerful legs and formidable claws make the lizards adept at tree climbing. Frillies are well camouflaged and when approached, always sidle around to the far side of the tree. A motionless frilly is practically invisible among sun dappled foliage.

Chlamydosarus kingii is a monotypic genus which is charaterised by the presence of a large, loose 'ruff' or 'frill' around the neck, which, though lying in folds around the neck and shoulders when the lizard is at rest, can be erected by opening the mouth when the lizard is alarmed. The frill on each side overlaps on the crown of the head. When the lizards extraordinary frill is exposed with the sunlight behind the paper thin 'parasol's' colours are quite remarkable.

Once found as far south as Brisbane, frill-necked lizards are today common only in northern regions of Australia and southern New Guinea. To have seen yet alone held one of these icons of Australia has indeed been one of life's pleasurable moments.

TOP END FROGGING IN THE WET SEASON JANUARY 1997

By: Barbara Harvey

A cyclone had passed by a week or so before and the weather (while I was there) was 'frog perfect'! Everything green and wet, a good thunderstorm every afternoon with no rain at night.

First site was at Fogg Dam, which is situated some 52kms ESE of Darwin along the Arnhem Highway. First, I took the boardwalk through the swamp. Many Litoria bicolor, L. convexiusculus, Crinia bilingua and L. rothii calling but I only saw L. convexiusculus, which likes to call from under spiky fallen Pandanus leaves! This together with their extremely slippery skin secretions, they are almost capture-proof! This secretion is also extremely toxic to other frogs and will kill any other species placed in the same bag.

Better frogging was to be had on the way home along the road where well filled table drains had frogs jumping from one side of the road to the other. Species seen: Cyclorana australis (both putty and bright green colour morph), L. rothii, L. bicolor, L. rubella, Limnodynastes ornatus, L. dahlii, and Uperoleia inundata. Had to give up stopping the car - too many frogs...

Second site was at a creek and associated floodplain near Darwin Airport along Amy Johnson Drive. Clear water was flowing to a depth of about 20cm over the floodplain and I saw: U. inundata, U. lithomoda, Crinia bilingua, Litoria caerulea, L rothii, L. tornieri and both Limnodynastes convexiusculus and ornatus. A Gilberts Dragon (Lophognathus gilberti) was asleep on a tree and a fearsome-looking Toebiter in the water added to the night's attractions. *(I think in Barbara's case here she means 'water beetle' - the trouble with common names! Ed.)

The next night's frogging was at Katherine Gorge - a community Frogwatch project organised by Ian Morris (author of the recently published Steve Parrish Natural History Guide to Kakadu). The roll-up of froggers, young and old was amazing. At least 100 people attended. After the frog collection everyone gathered at the Intepretive Centre where Ian identified the frogs and brought each one up on his computer screen. I was able to add Cyclorana longipes, Litoria pallida, L. inermis, L. wotulumensis and L. nasuta to my trip list. However, our main quarry, Notaden metanoscaphus proved elusive - none calling and only one metamorph collected, indicating they had bred after the rains from the cyclone and finished.

The next two nights' venue was to be near Ian's place, in the Elizabeth Valley, south of Noonamah, where many N. melanoscaphus were calling - but always at least 300m from us! Three were found the first night and none the next, despite six of us searching. There was about 8cm of clear water flowing over the laterite substrate of the floodplain, and being very lightly grasses, visibility was excellent. Where DO they hide?

Altogether a most successful frogging trip, a total list of 18 spp of which 9 were new to me, while daytime sorties netted 71 spp of birds, 9 spp of other herpetofauna, 3 spp of mammal and 13 spp of fish and other marine critters including several Box Jellyfish and a magnificent Blue-spotted Fantail Stingray!

SYNOPSIS OF THREATENED FROG RECOVERY TEAM (TFRT) MEETING OF THE NORTHERN SUBCOMMITTEE

FEBRUARY 14TH 1997

(Previous representation of the North Queensland Naturalist Club was by Eleanor Duignan, but as Eleanor was unable to attend this year's meeting a written report has been compiled by: Deborah Pergolotti
Frogs Co-ordinator, Cape York Herpetological Society).

Some previous agenda items were revisited this meeting, most notably the water extraction situation in FNQ and the overall roles and responsibilities of Recovery Team Members.

On the water issues, the Team is still waiting for word from the Water Resources Department on the release of their Draft Water Management Strategy for public comment. The Team aims to be accepted as an advisor and information resource - providing an input to government on the impact of water usage policies on amphibians in general but especially threatened species.

Meanwhile, ANCA'S representative to the Team (Anne Duncan) has been replaced temporarily by Sue Wright. Sue has put in a marvelous effort assisting the Team in sorting out how each individual and each interest group (management, scientific, and community/public) can facilitate the activities and goals of species Recovery Teams. (For example, as a community group's representative to the TRFT, I can be involved in a diverse range of activities from providing data to the Team, to coordinating community group projects and educating the community. Anyone who is interested in doing something to help threatened frogs is welcome to contact me to have a chat about your ideas or how you can participate in projects already underway.

Another item which impacts the cast majority of environment and wildlife groups including the Recovery Team) is the proposed sale of Telstra. A body has been set up called the National Heritage Trust and this body will be responsible for distributing funds from the sale of Telstra to community groups. There are some grave concerns about how this body will be making decisions about funds distributed, especially to small, focused groups such as the Tablelands Frog Club Inc., and the Cape York Herpetological Society, etc. Although the funds will not be available for two years, it seems that usual funding sources are adopting a 'do nothing' approach, choosing to suspend funds to current programms while waiting for the 'pot of gold' at the end of the Telstra rainbow. Many questions remain: What usual funds will be available before the Telstra sale? Is the National Heritage Trust making the funding criterion impossible for smaller groups to satisfy? Will the money be spent on suitable projects anyway?

The draft of the intended Recovery Plan for Endangered Frogs was distributed at this meeting, but members were informed that this Recovery Plan still hasn't been endorsed by the Queensland Department of Environment and its implementation is still in limbo. Part of the reason is the lack of support and/or interest from the Queensland Coalition Government and the as yet undetermined funding from the Commonwealth. These two items remain the leading obstacles to the Team's work. MEANWHILE, THE FROGS ARE STILL DYING...

A Bell Miner at its rather loosely built cup-shaped nest. Grasses and thin twigs; suspended by the rim.

THE SILVER-VOICED BELLBIRDS

By: Derna Elsdon

'And softer than slumber,and sweeter than singing,
The notes of the bellbirds are ringing and ringing,
The silver-voiced bellbirds, the darlings of daytime,
They sing in September their songs of the May-time'

Bell Miners, 'Bellbirds' (Manorina melanophrys) are small olive green birds with bright yellow legs and beaks, some dark marks about the face and a small, red patch behind the eye. They are often hard to see, but their loud bell-like calls always betray their presence.

How do bellbirds make that sound?

The voice or sounds are produced in the syrinx in the bird's throat. Depending on the length and width of this organ, the syrinx produces different sounds just like the different sounds made by the wind instruments such as the flute, trumpet and saxophone. The bellbirds' calls are used to maintain contact with the flock and to keep other birds out of their territory.

Bellbirds feed on a variety of insects but mainly on 'lerp'. *('Lerp' is a protective, sugary housing which protects the eggs produced by the small sap-sucking insects called Psyllids). They are very aggressive and spend a great deal of time chasing away other birds. As a result of their chasing away other birds - some of which normally feed on the Psyllids, the insect population increases dramatically. The insects continue feeding on the trees causing 'dieback' (trees dying due to stress).

Bellbirds are one of the many Australian birds which breed communally. The female alone builds the nest and broods the eggs, but is attended by many 'helpers' which assist in feeding the young chicks. Each nest is associated with a female's territory and several territories form a colony. Bellbird colonies are very stable with the birds moving on to new territories when the nesting tree's health declines (which could be a time span of 50 years).

Where are Bellbirds found?

Bellbirds are only found in South-eastern Australia from south east Queensland to central Victoria and only on the eastern side of the Great Dividing Range. They are always found in hilly country, most often in gullies. They live in eucalypt forests with a thick understory. (The layer of shrubs and bushes under the trees).

The above information came from educational boards in the Goomburra State Forest Park which is accessed off the Cunningham Highway at Clintonvale. An excellent camping area.

CHECKLIST OF PLANTS OF THE CAIRNS CENTRAL SWAMP

By: R. Jago

The following checklist items are conclusive to the previous published series of articles. The booklet in its entirety shall be available upon request and is currently being compiled. All of the plants listed are from personal observation and although the list is under constant review the exercise was to survey the area and to form an accurate basis for future referral. With the constant threat of development and encroachment the intent was to list all plant species before they disappear.

PHILYDRACEAE							
Philydrum lanuginosum						F	
PHYTOLACCACEAE							
*Rivina caninium			C	D		F	G
PITTOSPORACEAE							
Pittosporum ferrugineum	A	B		D		F	
POACEAE							
*Brachiaria mutica	A	B		D	E	F	G
*Chloris gayana	A	B		D		F	G
*Cynodon dactylon						F	
*Eleusine indica				D			
Heteroppgon triticeus				D			
Imperata cylindrica	A		C	D		F	
*Melinis minutiflora			C	D			
*Melinis repens			C			F	
Oplismenus compositus	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
*Panicum maximum	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Panicum sp.				D			
Paspalum scrobiculatum						F	
Phragmites sp.	A	B	C	D		F	
*Setaria sphacelata var. sericea				D		F	G
Sporobolus indicus			C	D		F	
Sporobolus virginicus		B	C			F	
Themeda triandra				D			
POLYGONACEAE							
Persicaria subsessilis				D		F	
PONTEDERIACEAE							
Monochoria vaginalis				D			
PROTEACEAE							
Grevillea glauca				D			
Persoonia falcata				D			
RHAMNACEAE							
Alphitonia excelsa			C	D		F	G
Rhamnella vitiensis			C	D		F	G

RHIZOPHORACEAE							
Bruguiera gymnorhiza	A	B	C	D			G
Carallia brachiata	A	B		D	E	F	G
Ceriops tagal			C	D			
RUBIACEAE							
Canthium coprosmoides			C	D		F	
Hedyotis auricularia var. melanesica					E		
*Ixora coccinea			C				
*Mitracarpus hirtus				D	E	F	
Myrmecodia beccarii			C	D		F	
Nauclea orientalis	A	B		D	E	F	G
*Oldenlandia corymbosa var. corymbosa				D		F	
Psychotria coelosperum	A						
Randia fitzalanii	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
*Richardia brasiliensis				D			
Timonius timon	A	B	C	D		F	G
RUTACEAE							
Melicope elleryana	A	B	C	D		F	G
*Murraya exotica	A		C			F	G
SANTALACEAE							
Exocarpus latifolius			C	D			
SAPINDACEAE							
Arytera divaricata						F	
Cupaniopsis anacardioides	A	B		D			
Cupaniopsis flagelliformis var. flagelliformis				D			
Diploglottis diphyllostegia						F	
Ganophyllum falcatum		B		D		F	G
Guioa acutifolia	A	B	C	D		F	G
Jagera pseudorhus	A	B	C	D		F	G
Mischocarpus exangulatus						F	
Mischocarpus lanchnocarpus	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
SCROPHULARIACEAE							
Limnophylla aromatica						F	
SONNERATIACEAE							
Sonneratia alba						F	
SAPOTACEAE							
Mimusops elengi		B					
Plaquium galactoxylum	A						
Pouteria chartacea	A	B	C	D		F	G
Pouteria xerocarpa				D		F	
SIMAROUBACEAE							
Brucea javanica			C	D		F	
SMILACACEAE							
Eustephus latifolius			C	D	E	F	G

Geitonoplesium cymosum						F	
Smilax australis		B	C	D		F	G
SOLANACEAE							
*Capsicum annuum var. glabriusculum					E		
*Solanum seaforthianum				D		F	G
*Solanum torvum			C	D	E	F	
STERCULIACEAE							
Abroma fastuosa				D			
Brachychiton acerifolius		B	C	D			
Commersonia bartramia				D	E	F	
Sterculia quadrifida				D	E	F	G
TACCACEAE							
Tacca leonopetaloides				D			
THYMELAEACEAE							
Wikstroemia indica				D			
TILIACEAE							
Grewia retusifolia				D			
*Triumfetta rhomboidea			C				
TYPHACEAE							
Typha orientalis		B		D			
ULMACEAE							
Celtis paniculata				D			
Trema orientalis						F	
Trema tomentosa						F	
VERBENACEAE							
Avicennia eucalyptifolia	A	B	C	D		F	G
Clerodendrum floribundum				D			
Clerodendrum inerme	A						G
Clerodendrum longiflorum var. glabrum			C	D	E	F	G
Faradaya splendida						F	
Gmelina dalrympleana	A		C	D		F	
Gmelina fasciculiflora						F	
*Lantana camara		B	C	D		F	
Prema serratifolia	A	B	C	D		F	G
*Stachytarpheta sp.				D			
Vitex acuminata				D		F	
VITACEAE							
Ampelocissus acetosa				D			
Cayratia maritima	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Cissus repens					E	F	
Tetrastigma nitens						F	
ZINGIBERACEAE							
Alpinia caerulea			C	D		F	

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